

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06818 201631Z

71

ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9367

INFO GOV PANCANAL

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6818

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN, PINT

SUBJ: CHANGES IN GOP CABINET

SUMMARY. GOP HAS APPOINTED LIC. MANUEL BALBINO MORENO TO BE HEAD OF A NATIONAL SUPPLY COMMISSION AND HAS NAMED DR. ARISTIDES ROYO TO REPLACE MORENO AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION. MORENO WILL TAKE ROYO'S POSITION ON THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION. THE CABINET CHANGE PROBABLY IS PART OF AN "AUTO-COUP" DESIGNED TO ALLEVIATE CONSERVATIVE PRESSURES ON THE GOP. END SUMMARY.

1. GOP-CONTROLLED NEWSPAPER MATUTINO THIS MORNING CARRIED AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT DR. ARISTIDES ROYO HAD BEEN NAMED AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION TO REPLACE LIC. MANUEL BALBINO MORENO WHO WAS BEING APPOINTEEJMS HEAD OF A NATIONAL SUPPLY COMMISSION. THE SUPPLY COMMISSION ACCORDING TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS BEING CREATED DUE TO THE SCARCITY OF MANY PRODUCTS WHICH WERE CONSIDERED NECESSARY FOR THE WELL BEING OF THE PEOPLE. THE SAME ANNOUNCEMENT INDICATED BALBINO MORENO HAD BEEN NAMED TO SERVE ON THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION, OSTENSIBLY TO FILL THE VACANCY LEFT BY ROYO'S DEPARTURE.

2. AMONG THE SURFEIT OF RUMORS RICHOTETING AROUND PANAMA CITY HAS BEEN ONE THAT THE GOP WOULD CARRY OUT AN "AUTO-COUP" I. E.,

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06818 201631Z

CABINET CHANGES, TO BLUNT THE CRITICISM OF CONSERVATIVES AND

THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THESE SHIFTS ARE PROBABLY PARTS OF THIS EFFORT. ALTHOUGH BALBINO MORENO IS ONE OF THE BETTER MANAGERS IN THE CABINET AND U S OFFICIALS HAVE FOUND HIM COOPERATIVE AND RECEPTIVE, HE HAS BEEN AN ANATHEMA TO CONSERVATIVES IN PANAMA. THEY CONSIDERED HIM TO BE ONE OF THE LEADING LEFTISTS IN THE GOP AND, BECAUSE OF HIS EFFICIENCY TO BE ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS. HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN CAUGHT UP IN CONTROVERSY CONCERNING A DRAFT EDUCATION REFORM LAW. PRESIDENT LAKAS REPORTEDLY INTERCEDED TO DELAY PROMULGATION OF THE LAW.

3. DR. ROYO HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION. HE IS YOUNG, DYNAMIC AND HAS BEEN ACTIVE NOT ONLY IN LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES BUT HAS GONE ON DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS FOR THE GOP TO PERU AND BRAZIL. HE HAS BEEN A KEY FIGURE IN DEVELOPING A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PANAMA AND PERU.
DANIELS

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